THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM): All right. The discussion on this Bill will continue tomorrow. I would request the hon. Home Minister to make the statement.

[MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.]

STATEMENT BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Attack on Raghunath Mandir in Jammu on 24th November, 2002

THE DEPTY PRIME MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L. K. ADVANI): Sir, terrorist groups being mentored from across the international border/Line of Control in J&K have struck once again -- this time on the famous Raghunath Temple of Jammu. These terrorists have demonstrated their total lack of concern for the overwhelming yearning for peace demonstrated by the people of J&K when they braved violence and exercised their right of vote in the recent Legislative Assembly elections. The terrorists have simultaneously shown their disdain for international opinion and the efforts of various countries which have been trying to apply moral and diplomatic pressure to end cross border terrorism in India.

In the last three days, there have been a series of attacks by terrorists, chief among which were a suicidal attack on the CRPF Camp at Pamposh Hotel Complex, Srinagar on 22nd November and targeting the Jammu-bound Army convoy through an IED near Jawahar Tunnel on 23rd November. These and the present attack on Raghunath Temple makes one speculate whether it is a mere coincidence that this spate of terrorist incidents has occurred just when the process of government formation has been completed in Pakistan. The spurt of violence also follows the release by the Government of Pakistan of the chief of LET, Hafiz Mohammad Sayeed. After his release, he vowed to continue the "Jehad" in J&K and gave a public call to step up terrorist violence in J&K.

Monitoring of the communication network of terrorists indicates that the Jammu attack is the handiwork of Al Mansooran, which is a cover organisation of the Lashkar-e-Toiba.

The present incident has been aimed at innocent civilians at a public place of worship. Earlier, in March this year also, the terrorists had carried out an attack on the Temple in which five persons were killed. The three terrorists responsible for that assault were also eliminated.

According to reports, late on Sunday evening two terrorists appeared at Raghunath Mandir Chowk, Jammu. One of them forced entry into the Mandir Complex and hurled grenades thereby creating panic in the area. People started running helter skelter. Taking advantage of the situation, the terrorists mingled with the crowed and entered Raghunath Mandir. When confronted by a CRPF constable, the terrorists opened indiscriminate fire killing him on the spot and causing casualties to a number of others including civilians. However, the Pujaris managed to close the sanctum sanctorum forcing one of the terrorist to take shelter on the periphery of the sanctum sanctorum. The CRPF personnel guarding the temple laid a cordon to prevent the escape of this terrorist. The operation at the Raghunath Temple culminated with the elimination of the terrorist hiding in the Mandir late on 24th November evening.

At the same time, the second terrorist escaped in the melee towards Panjbakhter Road, opened fire and lobbed grenades. This place is located just a few hundred meters away from Raghunath Temple where another Shiv Mandir called Rupaya Wala Mandir is located. Alert JKP personnel closed the doors of the Shiv Temple preventing entry of the terrorist. The terrorist resorted to firing from a congested area adjoining this Shiv Mandir. The area was then cordoned off and this terrorist was killed this morning (25th November).

The State Government has intimated that at the time of the earlier terrorist attack on the Raghunath Mandir in March, 2002, the complex was guarded by 2/8 Guard of SSB personnel besides local police for frisking etc., which was subsequently replaced by one Platoon of CRPF. This was further augmented by deploying one section each of the CRPF at Raghunath Chowk and Hari Market - entry points of the temple. In addition, local police are deployed also at various check points in and around the temple. In this terrorist attack on 24th November, 12 persons, including one policeman, one CRPF *jawan* and one militant were killed. Around 52 persons sustained injuries. One more injury to a Dy. S.P. occurred in the *Shiv Mandir* incident of today when the second terrorist was killed.

Today morning, His Excellency, the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, the hon. Chief Minister, accompanied by the Deputy Chief Minister and senior officers visited the encounter site and the hospital and took stock of the situation. Hon. Chief Minister also took a meeting with senior police officials yesterday to take further measures for strengthening security in the State, particularly in the Jammu region. A meeting of prominent

citizens is also being held by the hon. Chief Minister at Jammu to seek cooperation of the people in fighting terrorism in the State.

As a precautionary measure, curfew has been imposed in Jammu town.

The Government has also sent a team, including Shri I.D. Swami, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs and the DG, CRPF to Jammu today. Shri Chaman Lal Gupta, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence has also accompanied them. Also later, Raksha Mantri, Shri George Fernandes has gone to Jammu. ...*(Interruptions)*... It is it just now.

The above incident is part of a deliberate design to create a communal divide in Jammu and Kashmir. The people of the State, we are sure, will defeat these designs.

The Government remains committed to provide all assistance to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir in its fight against terrorism.

May I ask all Members of the House to join me in strongly condemning the incident and those responsible for it and also in offering condolences to the families of those killed in the incident and in reiterating the country's resolve to take all possible steps to combat and to defeat the scourge of cross-border terrorism in all its forms?

श्री सभापति : जो माननीय सदस्य इस पर क्लेरिफिकेशन लेना चाहते हैं, वे क्लेरिफिकेशन ले सकते हैं।

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, I would like to suggest one thing. We can seek clarifications later on. Just as the other House has done, we can also pass a Condolence Resolution, because, I understand, this incident may require a little detailed discussion, which is not possible at this later hour of the day. We can fix some time for a discussion on this, in consultation with the Home Minister and the Leader of the House, and at an appropriate time, we can do that. But, if it is agreed upon, a Resolution, similar to that which was passed in the other House, can be moved from the Chair, expressing our condolences to the members of the bereaved families and our solidarity with the people who are fighting against terrorism.

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: The Government is agreeable to this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I am sure, the whole House will join me in condemning this cowardly act within the Raghunath Temple

premises. The House commends the exemplary courage with which the security personnel acted to gun down the terrorists, and extends its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and also prays for the early recovery of those who have been injured.

I request Members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of those who lost their lives in this tragedy.

(Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House is now adjourned, till 11 a.m. tomorrow, the 26th November, 2002.

The House then adjourned at ten minutes past five of the clock, till eleven of the clock on Tuesday, the 26th November, 2002.

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